

Reader's Vespers of Great and Holy Friday



Last revised March, 2020

A note of preparation: It is encouraged to find an icon of Christ (Epitaphios / Shroud if available). Have it reverently prepared and setting out for a later transfer to a center table decorated with flowers. Also, a Gospel book (Bible if no Gospel book available), a Cross, a candle, and a hand censer are all items that can be used during the service but are not required.

*Sr. Rdr*¹: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God; have mercy upon us and save us! Amen.

Reader: Amen.²

Glory to You, our God; glory to You!

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, You are everywhere and fulfill all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One!

The Trisagion Prayers

Reader: Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity, have mercy on us!

O Lord, cleanse us from our sins!

O Master, pardon our transgressions!

O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your name's sake!

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

¹ “1st” Reader parts will be those traditionally chanted many OCA parish communities.

² Where “People” is indicated, singing in unison would be normative in OCA parish communities. If no one feels comfortable singing and/or leading the singing, then it can be chanted.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Sr. Rdr.: Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us.

Reader: Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Introductory Psalm

Psalm 103 (104)

Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, You are very great,
You are clothed with praise and majesty,
wrapping Yourself in light for a garment,
stretching out the sky like a skin;
Who covers His upper rooms with water,
Who makes clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,
Who makes spirits his angels
and His servant a flame of fire,
Who poises the earth on its axis;
it will not be moved throughout the ages.

The deep like a garment is its clothing.
On the mountains the waters stand.

At Your rebuke they run,
At the crack of Your thunder they are afraid.

Mountains rise up and plains sink down
to the place which You have appointed for them.

You have set a bound the waters will not pass,
so they will never return to cover the earth.

You send torrents in the ravines,
the waters run between the mountains.

They give drink to all the beasts of the field;
wild donkeys wait to quench their thirst.

The birds of the sky perch on them;
from among the rocks they pipe their calls.

You water the mountains from above.
The earth is filled with the fruit of Your works.

You make grass spring up for the cattle
and vegetation for the service of men,
for them to produce food from the earth
and wine which cheers man's heart,
that his face may be bright with oil
and that bread may strengthen man's heart.

The trees of the plain will be drenched,
the cedars of Lebanon which You planted.

There the sparrows build their nests,
the house of the heron at the top of them.

The high mountains are for the deer,
a rock is a refuge for hares.

You made the moon to mark the months,
the sun knows his going down.

You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
in which all the wild beasts of the forest prowl:

young lions roaring to seize their prey
and seeking their food from God.

The sun rises and they gather together
and lie down in their dens.

Man goes out to his work
and to his business until the evening.

How great are Your works, O Lord!
You have made all things in wisdom,
the earth is filled with Your creation.

This is the great and wide sea:
there live reptiles without number,
living creatures small and great;

There ships go to and fro;
there, too, is that sea serpent
which You have made to play in it.

All look expectantly to You
to give them their food in due season.

When You give it to them, they gather it;
when You open Your hand,
all things are filled with goodness.

But when You turn away Your face they are troubled.
You will take their spirit and they will die
and they will return to their dust.

You will send Your Spirit and they will be created,
and You will renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord be forever;
the Lord delights in His works.

He looks upon the earth and makes it tremble,
He touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord all my life,
I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

May my conversation be pleasing to Him,
and I will rejoice in the Lord.

May sinners vanish from the earth,
and the lawless so as to be no more.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

You made the moon to mark the months,
the sun knows his going down.

How great are Your works, O Lord!
You have made all things in wisdom,

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to You, O God. (3x)

Sr. Rdr.: Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Lord, I Call *(Tone 1)*

Psalm 140 (141):1-2

People: Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Hear me, O Lord.
Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Receive the voice of my prayer, when I call upon You.
Hear me, O Lord.

Let my prayer arise,
in Your sight as incense,
and let the lifting up of my hands
be an evening sacrifice.
Hear me, O Lord.

Psalm 140 (141):3-10

Reader: Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth,
and a door of enclosure and protection around my lips.

Do not incline my heart to evil words,
to make excuses for sins.
With men who practice lawlessness,
not even with their chosen ones will I be joined.

A just man will correct and rebuke me with mercy,
but may the oil of a sinner never anoint my head,
because again and again my prayer is against their pleasures.

Their judges and kings drown holding rocks:
they will hear my words, for they are sweet.

As a clod of earth is crushed on the ground,
our bones have been scattered beside the grave.

For my eyes look to You, O Lord;
O Lord, in You I trust, do not take away my life.

Keep me from the trap they have set for me
and from the snare of the evildoers.

Sinners will fall into their own net;
I am alone until I pass on.

Psalm 141 (142)

I cry to the Lord with my voice,
I pray with my voice to the Lord.

I will pour out before Him my prayer,
I will tell my trouble before Him.

When my spirit departs from me,
You know my paths.
In this way that I was going,
they hid a trap for me.

I look to the right hand and watch,
but there is no one who knows me.
Escape is cut off from me,
but there is no one seeking my life.

I cried to You, O Lord, and said,
“You are my hope,
You are my portion in the land of the living.”

Attend to my prayer,
for I have been brought very low.
Deliver me from those who are persecuting me,
because they are stronger than I am.

Bring my soul out of prison
that I may confess Your name,

The righteous are waiting for me
until You reward me.

Psalm 129 (130)

Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord;
O Lord, hear my voice.

Let Your ears be attentive
to the cry of my prayer.

If You, O Lord, should take note of our sins,
O Lord, who would survive?
But with You there is forgiveness.

Tone 1

6. All creation was changed by fear,
seeing you upon the Cross, O Christ.
The sun was darkened and the earth shook.
All creatures suffered with their Creator.
O Lord, You voluntarily suffered for us: glory to You!
5. For Your name's sake, O Lord, I wait for You,
my soul waits for Your word,
my soul hopes for the Lord,

All creation was changed... (*repeat above*).
4. from the morning watch until night.
From the morning watch
let Israel hope for the Lord.

Tone 2

Why do the godless people plot in vain?
Why do they put to death the Life of all?
O great wonder!
The Creator is betrayed into the hands of lawless men!
The Lover of mankind is nailed to a Cross,
that He may release the prisoners of Hades, who cry:
“O Long-suffering Lord, glory to You!”

3. For with the Lord there is mercy
and with Him there is great redemption.
And He will redeem Israel from all his sins.

Today, the undefiled Virgin sees You suspended upon the Cross,
O Word.

She laments within herself and is sorely pierced in her heart.
She groans in agony from the depth of her soul.
She pulls her hair and cheeks, beating her chest and crying
pitifully:

“Woe is me, O my divine Son!
Woe is me, O Light of the world, Lamb of God!
Why have You departed from before my eyes?”
The bodiless hosts were seized with trembling and cried:
“O Incomprehensible Lord, glory to You!”

Psalm 116 (117)

2. Praise the Lord, all you nations,
praise Him, all you peoples!

When she who bore You without seed
saw You suspended on the tree, O Christ, Creator and God of all,
she cried bitterly: “Where is the beauty of Your countenance?
I cannot bear to see You unjustly crucified.
Hasten and arise that I may see Your resurrection from the dead
on the third day!”

1. For great is His mercy to us,
and the truth of the Lord continues forever.

Tone 6

Today, the Master of creation stands before Pilate.
The Creator is given over to die on a Cross!
As a lamb He is voluntarily led to slaughter!
He is nailed, His side is pierced, His lips are moistened with gall!
The Redeemer of all is struck on the cheek!
The Creator of all is mocked by His own creatures!
What a great love the Master shows for mankind!
He prayed to his Father even for those who put Him to death:
“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

How does the lawless assembly kill the King of creation,
not remembering His gracious acts?
He even called them to remembrance, saying:
“What have I done to you, My people?
Have I not worked wonders in all of Judea?
Have I not raised the dead by a word?
Have I not healed all manner of sickness?
How do you now reward Me?
Why do you forget Me?
For healing others, you wound Me!
For raising the dead, you crucify Me!
For being gracious, you call Me a thief!
For giving the Law, you call Me lawless!
For being the King of creation, you condemn Me!”
O Long-suffering Lord, glory to You.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We see a strange and fearful mystery accomplished today!
He Whom none may touch is seized!
He Who looses Adam from the curse is bound!
He Who tries the hearts of men is unjustly brought to trial!
He Who closed the abyss is shut in prison!
He before Whom the hosts of heaven stand with trembling stands
before Pilate!
The Creator is struck by the hand of His creature!
He Who comes to judge the living and the dead is condemned to
the Cross!
The Conqueror of Hades is enclosed in a tomb!
O You that have endured all these things in Your tender love,
You have saved all men from the curse,
O Long-suffering Lord, glory to You.

Gladsome Light

People: O gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly,
Holy, blessed Father: O Jesus Christ:
Now that we have come to the setting of the sun,
And behold the light of evening,
We praise God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
For it is right, at all times,
To worship You in voices of praise,
O Son of God and Giver of life.
Therefore all the world glorifies You.

The First Prokeimenon

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the fourth tone: They divide My garments
among them, and for My raiment they cast lots.

People: They divide My garments among them,
And for My raiment they cast lots.

Reader: My God, my God! Attend to me! Why have You forsaken me?

People: They divide My garments among them,
And for My raiment they cast lots.

Reader: They divide My garments among them,

People: ... And for My raiment they cast lots.

The First Old Testament Reading

Reader: The reading from Exodus. (33:11-23)

So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people." And He said, "My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest." Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth." So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name." And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You

cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” And the LORD said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

The Second Prokeimenon

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the fourth tone: Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me, fight against those who fight against me!

People: Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me,
fight against those who fight against me!

Reader: They rewarded me evil for good; my soul is forlorn.

People: Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me,
fight against those who fight against me!

Reader: Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me,

People: ...fight against those who fight against me!

The Second Old Testament Reading

Reader: The reading from Job. (42:12-17)

Now the LORD blessed the latter *days* of Job more than the former; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first Day, the name of the second Cassia, and the name of the third Amaltheia's Horn. Under heaven were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. After his affliction, Job lived one hundred and seventy years; all the years he lived were

two hundred and forty-eight. And Job saw his sons and sons' sons *for* four generations. So Job died, old and full of days; and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up. This man is described in the Syriac Book as living in the land of Ausitis on the borders of Idumea and Arabia. And his name before was Jobab. And having taken an Arabian wife, he begot a son whose name was Ennon. And he was the son of Zareh, his father, a son of the sons of Easu, and of his mother Bosorrha, so that he was the fifth from Abraham.

The Third Old Testament Reading

Reader: The reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah. (52:13-54:1)

Thus says the Lord: So shall He sprinkle many nations. kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from

judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

“Sing, O barren, you *who* have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you *who* have not labored with child! For more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman,” says the LORD.

The Epistle Reading

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the sixth tone: They have laid me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.

People: They have laid me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.

Reader: O Lord, God of my salvation: I call for help by day, I cry out in the night before You!

People: They have laid me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.

Reader: They have laid me in the depths of the pit ...

People: ...in the regions dark and deep.

Reader: The reading from the first Epistle of the holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. (1:18-2:2)

Brethren, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Reader: The Alleluia in the first tone. Save me, O God, for the waters have come in, even unto my soul.

People: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Reader: My soul has awaited insults and the Passion.

People: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Reader: Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see.

People: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

The Gospel

Sr. Rdr.: The reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew.
(Mt. 27:1-38; Lk. 23:39-43; Mt. 27:39-54; Jn. 19:31-37; Mt. 27:55-61)

At that time, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."

Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" So Jesus said to him, "*It is as you say.*" And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him." But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" *They* all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it.*" And all the people answered and said, "His blood *be* on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was

crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not *one* of His bones shall be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

People: Lord have mercy (3x).³

³ When a clergyman reads this Gospel, the people’s response is, “Glory to Your passion, O Lord.”

Vouchesafe, O Lord

Reader: Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this night without sin.

Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Your name forever. Amen.

Let Your mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we have set our hope on You.

Blessed are You, O Lord: teach me Your statutes.

Blessed are You, O Master: make me to understand Your commandments.

Blessed are You, O Holy One: enlighten me with Your precepts.

Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever. Do not despise the works of Your hands.

To You belongs worship, to You belongs praise, to You belongs glory; to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Sr. Rdr.: Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

The Aposticha

Tone 2 – (Special Melody)

People: Joseph of Arimathea took You down from the tree,
the Life of all, cold in death.

Bathing You with sweet and costly myrrh,

he gently covered You with finest linen

and with sorrow and tender love in his heart,

he embraced Your most pure Body.

Trembling at this awesome sight,

he cried out to You, O Christ:

“Glory to Your condescension, O Lover of mankind!

Reader: The Lord is King, He is robed in majesty.

People: When You, the Redeemer of all, were placed in a tomb,
all Hades' powers quaked in fear.
Its bars were broken, its gates were smashed!
Its mighty reign was brought to an end,
for the dead came forth alive from their tombs,
casting off the bonds of their captivity.
Adam was filled with joy!
He gratefully cried out to You, O Christ:
"Glory to Your condescension, O Lover of mankind!"

Reader: For He has established the world so that it shall never be moved.

People: In the flesh You were willingly enclosed in the tomb,
Who are boundless and infinite in Your divinity,
You closed the chambers of death, O Christ.
You have emptied all the palaces of Hades.
You have honored this Sabbath with Your blessing, glory and
splendor!

Reader: Holiness befits Your house, O Lord, forevermore.

People: The powers of heaven shook with fear,
when they saw Your ineffable forbearance.
They beheld You slandered by lawless men,
mocked as a deceiver by transgressors.
They beheld the stone that closed Your tomb
sealed by the same hands that pierced Your side,
but they knew that Your death would be our life,
and joyfully they cried out to You, O Christ:
"Glory to Your condescension, O Lover of mankind!"

At this time, a hand censer and candle can be brought over to where the icon of Christ (or Epitaphios / Shroud) is placed.

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 3

People: Joseph, together with Nicodemus,
took You down from the tree,
Who clothe Yourself with light as with a garment.
He gazed on Your Body – dead, naked and unburied -
and in grief and tender compassion he lamented:
“Woe is me, O my sweetest Jesus!
A short while ago, the sun beheld You hanging on the Cross,
and it hid itself in darkness.
The earth quaked with fear at the sight.
The veil of the Temple was torn in two.
Lo, now I see You willingly submit to death for my sake.
How shall I bury You, O my God?
How can I wrap You in a shroud?
How can I touch Your most pure Body with my hands?
What songs can I sing for Your Exodus, O Compassionate One?
I magnify Your Passion.
I glorify Your burial
and Your holy Resurrection,
crying: ‘O Lord, glory to You!’”

The Canticle of Simeon *Reader or People:*

Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.

The Trisagion Prayers

All: Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity, have mercy on us!

O Lord, cleanse us from our sins!

O Master, pardon our transgressions!

O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your name's sake!

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Sr. Rdr.: Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us.

Reader: Amen.

As the people sing the following Troparia, those who are moving the icon of Christ (Epitaphios / Shroud if available), the Holy Gospel book (or Bible), and the Cross make three prostrations. A layperson should carry the Gospel upright below the head. The icon of Christ should be carried the same way (an Epitaphios / Shroud can be cradled in the arms). The Shroud can be preceded with a candle and a hand censer. Everyone involved then proceeds to a table decorated with flowers. The Icon / Shroud is placed on the table and the Gospel book on top of or to the side of the icon. The Cross, if available, can be placed on top of the icon or to the side opposite the Gospel. The placement of the Gospel and Cross may be dependent upon the size of the icon.

The Troparia

Tone 2

People: The noble Joseph,
when he had taken down Your most pure Body from the tree,
wrapped it in fine linen,
and anointed it with spices,
and placed it in a new tomb.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The angel came to the myrrh-bearing women at the tomb and
said:

“Myrrh is fitting for the dead,
but Christ has shown Himself a stranger to corruption.

A trusted reader or layperson may offer an appropriate reflection from the Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion or a Saint. If this offered, it should conclude with “Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us.” This is then followed by the faithful with “Amen.”

The Dismissal

People: More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond
compare than the seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to
God, the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you.

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

O Lord, bless.

Sr. Rdr.: O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Who endured fearful suffering, the life-creating Cross, and voluntary burial in the flesh for us and for our salvation, Christ our true God, through the prayers of His most pure Mother; of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable Apostles; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; and of all the saints: have mercy on us and save us.

Reader: Amen.

The Shroud is then venerated by the people, each making three prostrations, two before kissing the Shroud, and one after. The following Troparion can be sung or chanted:

Troparion

Come, let us bless Joseph of eternal memory,
who came by night to Pilate
and begged for the Life of all:
“Give me this Stranger,
Who has no place to lay His head:
Give me this Stranger
Whom an evil disciple betrayed to death.
Give me this Stranger,
Whom His Mother saw hanging upon the Cross,
and with a mother’s sorrow cried, weeping:
‘Woe is me, O my Child,
Light of my eyes and Beloved of my bosom,
for what Simeon foretold in the Temple now has come to pass:
a sword has pierced my heart;
but change my grief to gladness by Your Resurrection.’”
We worship Your Passion, O Christ!
We worship Your Passion, O Christ!
We worship Your Passion, O Christ!
and Your Holy Resurrection.
